

## Bridge Clinic fills the gap for youth psychiatry

In March, the DCFS Division of Clinical Services and Professional Development opened the Bridge Psychiatric Clinic for children. The Bridge Clinic is dedicated to serving children referred for psychiatric care when there is an immediate need, and psychiatric services are temporarily unavailable. The clinic will serve as a bridge, providing psychiatric care until an appointment with a long-term psychiatrist can be secured.

The lack of quality mental health providers with the expertise in working with youth in DCFS care has long been a sticking point. The successful launch of the Integrated Assessment (IA) Program has DCFS identifying even more psychiatric issues as children enter the system and thus increasing the demand for services.

"We realized early on that we would need a strong psychiatric provider to work with us as we learned more about a youth's specific needs. Perpetual waitlists wouldn't serve our families well," said Velma Williams, deputy director of the DCFS Division of Clinical Services and Professional Development.

Williams made certain that a reliable psychiatric provider was part of the IA equation. Working with La Rabida Children's Hospital, the Bridge Psychiatric Clinic officially opened on March 20th.

Dr. SooMi Lee, a pediatric psychiatrist with the University of Chicago and La Rabida Children's Hospital, provides psychiatric medical services for the new clinic. Dr. Lee has worked closely with the Department to develop the Bridge Clinic.

"If the Integrated Assessment shows that a child is severely depressed, we can't have him in a foster home for weeks without treatment while the caregiver looks for a community provider. The Bridge clinic will fill that gap for caseworkers and families requesting a psychiatric assessment," said Dr. Lee.

The clinic will then work with community providers to ensure a smooth transition. The Bridge Psychiatric Clinic conducts the clinics on Monday and Thursday evenings. Caseworkers should contact the Bridge Psychiatric Clinic Coordinator, Jose Lopez, with referrals and appointment requests. Currently, the clinic



*Dr. Soo Mi Lee announces the opening of the Bridge Psychiatric Clinic for Children to the Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council.*

serves the Cook County area and will operate according to need. However, DCFS hopes to expand the clinic to eventually serve youth across Illinois who have acute psychiatric needs.

In addition to the in-house psychiatric services, the Bridge Clinic operates a phone line for questions about psychiatric care or medication monitoring.

"I know that psychiatric medications can be confusing. I want to be able to give caregivers clear explanations and directions so they can better take care of youth," said Dr. Lee.

For more information, please contact the Bridge Psychiatric Clinic at 312-328-2833.

## Caregiver Institutes offer help to navigate transitions

The 2006 Caregivers Institutes' nine-stop statewide tour came to Cook County on March 18 at 6201 S. Emerald and May 6 at 1911 S. Indiana. The DCFS Division of Clinical Services and Professional Development's Office of Foster Parent Support Services, along with the divisions of Service Intervention and Operations, rallied a full slate of experts for a dynamic presentation on ways caregivers can help young people make effective transitions within and out of the child welfare system.

"These Institutes are our way to say thanks to caregivers by sharing information to help them as they help our young people," said Deputy Director Velma Williams.

The Saturday session at each location started with several youth in care describing how the adults in their lives contributed to them moving successfully toward adulthood. Likewise, caregivers also heard the adult perspective

on how to enhance that relationship. That personal testimony led into the opening remarks by Regional Administrators Michael Byrd and Chris McGrath as they each described the Department's strategic direction and how caregivers will be involved.

The Integrated Assessment and the CAYIT program are two initiatives that call for caregivers to be better informed when cases are opened and more involved during the life of the case. Representatives from the Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council also encouraged participants to use the local councils as a way to problem-solve and raise their voices.

The second portion of the training provided practical tips on how to move youth successfully toward self-sufficiency. The first important step is education. The Local Area Network Liaisons provided details on community programs to support students at risk of suspension, expulsion, and truancy. The group also learned about resources from the DCFS Education Advocates to help caregivers work with schools more effectively. Since the home can also be like a classroom, caregivers were coached on how to find "teachable moments" to shore up life lessons on finances, employment and practical matters.

Young people prepared with a foundation of education and life



*Lee Annes, CAYIT Statewide Coordinator, Sylvia Flores (left at table) of the Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council and Ray Gates of the DCFS Office of Foster Parent Support Services, discussed avenues for caregivers to be part of the decision-making process.*

skills will be ready to move on to college or employment. Staff from the Office of Education and Transition shared with caregivers many services and programs for both options. Perhaps spurred by the thought of youth embarking on successful, self-sufficient lives, the caregivers left the training informed and energized.

"My wife drags me to these trainings and I usually hate them. This one was fun and I learned a lot. I am coming back next year," said one foster father (who wishes to remain anonymous).

The Office of Foster Parent Support Services is taking that feedback and evaluations from the series of institutes to make plans for 2007. For more information or to receive materials, contact the office at 217-524-2422.

*Editor's Note: photos from the May 6 Institute at 1911 S. Indiana were not available at press time.*



*Michael Bryd, Cook South Regional Administrator, takes time between sessions to greet caregivers.*

## Chicago curfew keeps kids safe with help from families

Law enforcement agencies, including the Chicago Police Department, know that curfew enforcement keeps children safe. Studies have shown that juvenile crime goes down, but more telling is the fact that youth who become victims of crimes decreases at an even higher rate. With safety as the goal the City of Chicago, as of November 2005, has implemented new procedures for enforcing the Chicago curfew ordinance and the consequences for violating it.

Chicago curfew hours are: **10:30 p.m.** on any Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday until 6 a.m. the following day; and **11:30 p.m.** on any Friday or Saturday until 6 a.m. of the following day. It is a curfew offense if a minor remains in any public place or on the premises of any establishment within the city during curfew hours.

There is some room to work within these guidelines. For example, it is not a violation if the youth is with the parent or guardian. Youth can be at work or on their way to or from work, as long as they don't make any "detours." Official school, religious or other supervised events where the organizers take responsibility for the minor can go into curfew times.

Still, given those defenses and a few others in the ordinance, minors and their parents or guardians should also be aware of how the curfew rules will be

enforced if a youth is out after hours. At this time, the Department understands the process to work according to these steps. First, a police officer patrolling that beat would ask the youth's age and reason for being in a public place. If the officer believes the minor is in violation of curfew, the officer can then issue a citation. Next, if the youth lives in that district, the officer will drive him or her home and give the citation to the parent/guardian to sign. If the child is out in another district the officer would transport the youth to the local station or area station and have the parent/guardian come pick up the minor and sign the citation.

The new enforcement procedures now hold the parent/guardian accountable, rather than the minor. According to the city statute, "any parent, legal guardian or other adult having the legal care or custody of a minor who violates any provision shall be absolutely liable and fined not less than \$25 not more than \$500.00 or be subject to an order to perform community service." DCFS understands that these consequences have more implications for adults providing foster care and residential services to youth. The Chicago Curfew Task Force, made up of representatives from foster care agencies, residential programs and DCFS management, has been meeting regularly with City officials for many months to iron out the

details of how the law will be implemented among youth in care.

"All they really want is a plan to protect the child from becoming a victim," said Anne Studzinski, Special Advisor to the DCFS Director.

If a youth receives a curfew violation, the caregiver should inform the caseworker. After the third violation, the parent or guardian will receive notice to appear in municipal court for a hearing. First, it is crucial that the caregiver as guardian attend the hearing. Guardian's who do not appear face a \$500.00 fine. Secondly, foster parents should be certain to tell the court that the child involved is in DCFS care. Thirdly, the foster parent and caseworker should present a plan to the hearing officer that demonstrates the effort to have the child comply with curfew rules. The hearing officer could then "defer ruling" and ask the parties to come back for a progress report. Hopefully, by the next court date the youth has been more compliant, and the case could be dismissed, avoiding all fines.

DCFS is still in talks with the City and other parties to further refine this process and address several outstanding issues. The Department is also discussing the guidelines with private agencies that support foster families so they can respond appropriately.



## Cook North rallies against child abuse and neglect

The Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), along with community-based organizations in the Cook North Region on April 22 hosted its **“3rd Annual Walk and Resource Rally Against Child Abuse and Neglect”**. The purpose of the event was to increase awareness of the problem of child abuse and neglect, as well as to educate community residents on how and where to seek help.

The day began with a 1.5 mile walk from California Park and concluded at the DCFS office at 2550 W. Bradley Place. Upon arriving at the office, community members, families and providers who participated in the walk were greeted by staff with refreshments provided by Dominick’s Finer Foods and Jamba Juice. The event also included a resource fair with provider representation from across the region and music and entertainment including the City’s Moon Jump, face painting, and a clown.

It was a great opportunity for the Department, Region and community to come together and show support and offer solutions to local families in need!

## Cook North Regional Administrator Chris McGrath thanks caregivers

Greetings,

On behalf of Cook North staff, thank you for your continuing commitment to our children and youth in care. Some of you are long-standing caregivers who have worked closely with us over the years. Others we have met for the first time over the course of this past year. During the month of May we take time out to acknowledge you for the work that you do on behalf of our children. We know that this is a twenty-four hour job that continues seven days per week. Words cannot express our appreciation for your commitment and hard work on their behalf.

Throughout the year we experience challenges in providing and accessing appropriate services for our children. We come together to decide on the best course of action to be taken. During these situations we learn to listen to one another and, in the end, to develop the best plan for ‘our’ child.

In our efforts to overcome these challenges, we sometimes forget to embrace and celebrate our successes and individual strengths. We do recognize that we rely upon our partnerships, persistence and support provided by our caregiver community. From seeing that a child makes it through a morning without a



*The entire Cook North management team offers thanks to the region’s foster parents. Pictured left to right are Jackie Bright Program Manager; JoAnn Smith, Clinical Manager; Chris McGrath, Regional Administrator; and Sari Rowitz, Resource Manager.*

tantrum to working together to achieve permanency for a youth, we depend on the relationships that we have with our caregivers to provide opportunities and solutions for them.

Although we take the opportunity in May to formally recognize the invaluable work that you and your families accomplish, take pride in knowing that we recognize the benefits of all that you do for our children throughout the entire year.

Thank you for providing for our children.

**Regional Administrator  
Chris McGrath and the Cook  
North management team**

## Cook North region provides foster parent training tailored to needs

As part of the region's Implementation Plan, the Cook North Region continues to meet foster parents' needs for training. Assessing the need for training and taking action is included in the Foster Parent Law as a formal responsibility for the agency. Annually, when the region reviews its implementation plan, foster parents identify additional trainings that they would like to have.

To meet the needs, the region has created foster parent training teams that work collaboratively to develop a training schedule of topics of interest as well as those trainings outlined in the implementation plan. The team has undergone various transitions over the last year; however, it continues to address foster parent training concerns at the local level.

We welcome your participation in the trainings as well as in the planning process. We look to offer and design our trainings to meet your needs! Based on your input, we have offered trainings on medication management, stress management, education issues, transition services, and domestic violence issues with adults and youth.

To find out more about the trainings, offer ideas or to become involved on our local team, please contact Iris Cuevas at 773-866-5680, Lainie Gershon Madio at

847-745-3063 or Jackie Rivers at 312-328-2537. The next regional training will be on May 25.

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### Cook North Regional Foster Care Advisory Council

The Cook North Regional Foster Care Advisory Council is another means for caregivers to learn what they need to know to effectively parent DCFS youth. The council meets on the **second Tuesday of each month from 10:30 to Noon at 1911 S. Indiana**. At the meetings, foster parents can learn what is happening in the local region in terms of new policies and how new practices impact caregivers. Also, the Cook North representative to the Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council brings back news that affects caregivers across the state.

It is so important that the Advisory Council stay active and involved. This is a way to get the ear of the local management team, address your concerns and stay informed. The region has made it simple to participate. Even if caregivers cannot join the meeting in person, they can join by phone. The Cook North Regional Advisory Council is open to all foster, adoption and guardianship families who reside in the region, both those supervised by DCFS and private agencies. For more information, contact Sari Rowitz at 312-328-2484.

## Cook Central Regional Administrator thanks caregivers



Joyce Hall

It gives me great pleasure to send a note to our foster parent partners in the field of child welfare. As Spring has gallantly pushed old man winter

aside, I want to thank you for your invaluable work on behalf of our children who are in the care of the state of Illinois.

Many times challenges and issues appear to be magnified after a long winter and its sometimes overall gloomy days. But, as we see the sun holding court and the buds appearing, we can all experience a lifting of our spirits, in spite of the loads many of you must bear.

On behalf of our entire staff at the Cook Central Region, I salute you for your commitment, consistency, calm in the face of turmoil, and character. For only persons of esteemed character can continue to do the work that you do. Have a wonderful Foster Parent Appreciation Month.

**Joyce E. Hall**  
**Regional Administrator**

## Cook South RA thanks caregivers



*Michael  
Byrd*

Too many boys have become men and girls have become women without believing the world is a good, kind, safe and loving place. Too many young people seem to be without a place to put their hopes and their trust. They don't find joy. Very few things provide them comfort from their pain, and the things that do don't last for long.

When I look at myself and the world I live in, it becomes easy to see how our children are in such great need of people like you.

I offer my thanks for everything you do. Many of you have kept them from a world filled with such anger, rudeness, lack of love and a definite lack of respect. You have been someone who they can trust to protect them, trust to excite them, trust to love them whether they are smiling up at you after bedtime stories or throwing a temper tantrum. You have been someone who shows them that they are cared for even through discipline. This is why you are to be acknowledged during Foster Parent Appreciation month. Again I thank you.

**Michael Byrd**  
**Regional Administrator**

## Cook South is glad for services from Family Focus-Englewood

Cook South families can benefit from another community-based service, which is housed in Englewood. The agency serves families that live in the following zip codes: 60620, 60621, 60636 and may make exceptions to serve other Southside and suburban zip codes.

Services from Family Focus include:

- Parent training, support group trainings for prenatal and early childhood topics
- Home visits
- Referrals for community mental health, health care, education and job services, computer training, public aid, and public housing
- Drop – in support from trained family support staff
- Family and community violence prevention and intervention
- Advocacy in school
- Resource room open to the community
- Counseling
- Developmental screening
- Dinners, plays, movies, holiday events, field trips and more
- Programs provided for children between the ages of 0 – 21
- Teen Parent Services
- Ongoing educational hours for DCFS foster parents

Family Focus offers services for the foster children in your home as well as birth and adopted children.

For more information, contact Darren D. Harris, Program Supervisor, St. Bernard Hospital, 326 W. 64<sup>th</sup> Street Suite 305 Chicago, IL 60621; by phone at 773-962-036; or e-mail [darren.harris@family-focus.org](mailto:darren.harris@family-focus.org).

### Cook County Advocate reporters

#### **Cook North ~ Sari Rowitz**

312-328-2484 office  
312-328-2688 fax  
[SRowitz@idcfs.state.il.us](mailto:SRowitz@idcfs.state.il.us)  
1911 S. Indiana Ave.  
Chicago, IL 60616

#### **Cook Central**

773-292-7700 office  
773-292-7861 fax  
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Chicago, IL 60651

#### **Cook South ~ Bobby Evans**

773-371-6146 office  
773-371-6065 fax  
[BEvans@idcfs.state.il.us](mailto:BEvans@idcfs.state.il.us)  
6201 S. Emerald  
Chicago, IL 60621

Anyone can call the regional reporter with foster parent association news and schedules; local training notices; features on foster families and community members working for children; photos; and ideas for news articles or supportive services that would be helpful for caregivers to know.



## Cook South foster parents can stay involved in the region

### Thank you at the theater

As part of the Foster Parent Appreciation Month events, the Cook South region is pleased to present "An Evening at the Theater." The administration has arranged a special event on May 26 at ETA Performing Arts Theater. Tickets to the play and the award ceremony that will follow are limited. Contact Elise Worrell at 773-371-6114 for more details.

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### Upcoming support group meetings

Cook South region continues to have Foster Parent Support Group meetings at both the Emerald and Harvey Offices. Emerald meets on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday of each month and Harvey on the fourth Thursday. Both meetings are held from 10 a.m. to Noon. The group welcomes and encourages foster parents to attend the group meeting that best fits your schedule. All of our meetings are open to both DCFS and private agency foster parents who are located in the Cook South area. Visitors from other Regions are also welcome.

Additionally, evening support group meetings have been made available through collaboration with Metropolitan Family Services (MFS). These meetings occur from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. on the second and fourth Tuesdays of every month at MFS 235 W 103<sup>rd</sup>

Street. Contact Rosie Starks at 773-371-3651 or Pat Thompson at 773-371-3662 of Metropolitan Family Services for more information.

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Foster Parent inquiries and concerns for the Region can be directed to our dedicated **Foster Parent Support and Information line at 773-371-6113**. Our Foster Parent Support Specialists (FPSS) have been assigned to respond to this line on a regular basis.

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### Cook South Regional Advisory Council

The council meets on the **third Wednesday at 10 a.m. at the Emerald or Harvey DCFS offices**. Foster parents can learn what is happening at the local region and how procedures impact caregivers. Also, the Cook South representatives to the Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council bring back news that affects caregivers across the state.

It is so important that the Advisory Council stay active and involved. This is a way to get the ear of the local management team, address your concerns and stay informed. The Cook South Regional Advisory Council is open to all foster and adoptive families who reside in the region, both those supervised by DCFS and private agencies. For information, contact Geraldine Wilson at 773-306-1552.

## Knock at midnight for life skills

*I'm 16 years old and need a job, but I can't even fill out a job application. I wish I could manage my time better. Maybe then I would get BETTER grades in school. I would like to start saving my allowance, but I don't know how to open up a bank account. HELP!*

A Knock at Midnight provides life skills training to prepare older youth to transition to adulthood.

The training incorporates three core elements:

- Individualized training based on the Ansell-Casey Life Skills Assessment Learning Plan
- Hands-on and / or Learn-by-doing Methods
- Peer-to-peer Training

These tools to teach youth to smoothly transition into the mainstream of society. The sessions provide knowledge and insight into:

- Character building
- Preparing for employment
- Personal responsibility
- Financial responsibility
- Substance abuse avoidance
- Time management
- Conflict resolution

The Life Skills course lasts six weeks, meeting two days per week with trainings in the community. Contact the youth's case worker for a referral to life skills training.

# Cook County Training Calendar

## FosterPRIDE In-Service Training

### COOK SOUTH

#### Module 4 - The Sexual Development of Children and Responding to Sexual Abuse

(Three 3-hour sessions = 9 training hours)

**CHICAGO** *Aunt Martha's*  
June 20, 22 & 27 (Tue/Thu) 6:30-9:30 p.m.

**CHICAGO** *DCFS, 6201 S. Emerald*  
June 17 & 24 (Sat) 9:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.  
(SPANISH) 9:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.

## Virtual Training

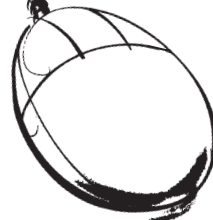
The DCFS Office of Training has blended technology with training in offering the new Virtual Training Center. The first on-line training for foster parents is called "Child and Family Team Meetings for Caregivers. Foster parents can earn three hours of training credits as they learn how a Child and Family Team Meeting (CFTM) helps the family and what the Caregiver's role is in the meeting.

Foster Parents can take this course using a computer in their home or coming to a DCFS facility, according to the schedule below:

- Thursday, June 1 from 12:45 p.m. - 4 p.m.
- Monday, June 5 from 12:45 p.m. - 4 p.m.  
Also on-site at DCFS Computer Lab - 6201 S. Emerald, Chgo
- Monday, June 5 from 6:15 p.m. - 9:30 p.m.
- Saturday, June 24 from 8:45 a.m. - 12 p.m.
- Tuesday, July 11 from 6:15 p.m. - 9:30 p.m.
- Thursday, July 27 from 12:45 p.m. - 4 p.m.

To register for the foster parent online training, caregivers may contact the DCFS registration unit at 877-800-3393.

To obtain more information about the new on-line foster parent training schedule go to [www.DCFStraining.org](http://www.DCFStraining.org) or email Jean Maher at [jmaher@idcfs.state.il.us](mailto:jmaher@idcfs.state.il.us).



## Educational Advocacy

Two 3-hour sessions = 6 training hrs.

It is mandatory for one foster parent in each family to attend Educational Advocacy Training in order to be re-licensed. Educational Advocacy Training is offered following each Foster PRIDE/ Adopt PRIDE training and many additional times. This six-hour course covers information foster parents need to know so that they can advocate for their foster children's educational rights and needs.

### COOK NORTH

**CHICAGO** *Irish American Center*  
June 3 (Sat) 9:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.

### COOK CENTRAL

**OAK PARK** *Hepzibah*  
June 10 (Sat) 9:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.

### COOK SOUTH

**CHICAGO** *DCFS, 6201 S. Emerald*  
June 10 (Sat) 9:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.

All classes are  
coordinated by  
Harold Washington  
College in Chicago.

Call **312-553-5821**  
or **-3031** to register.